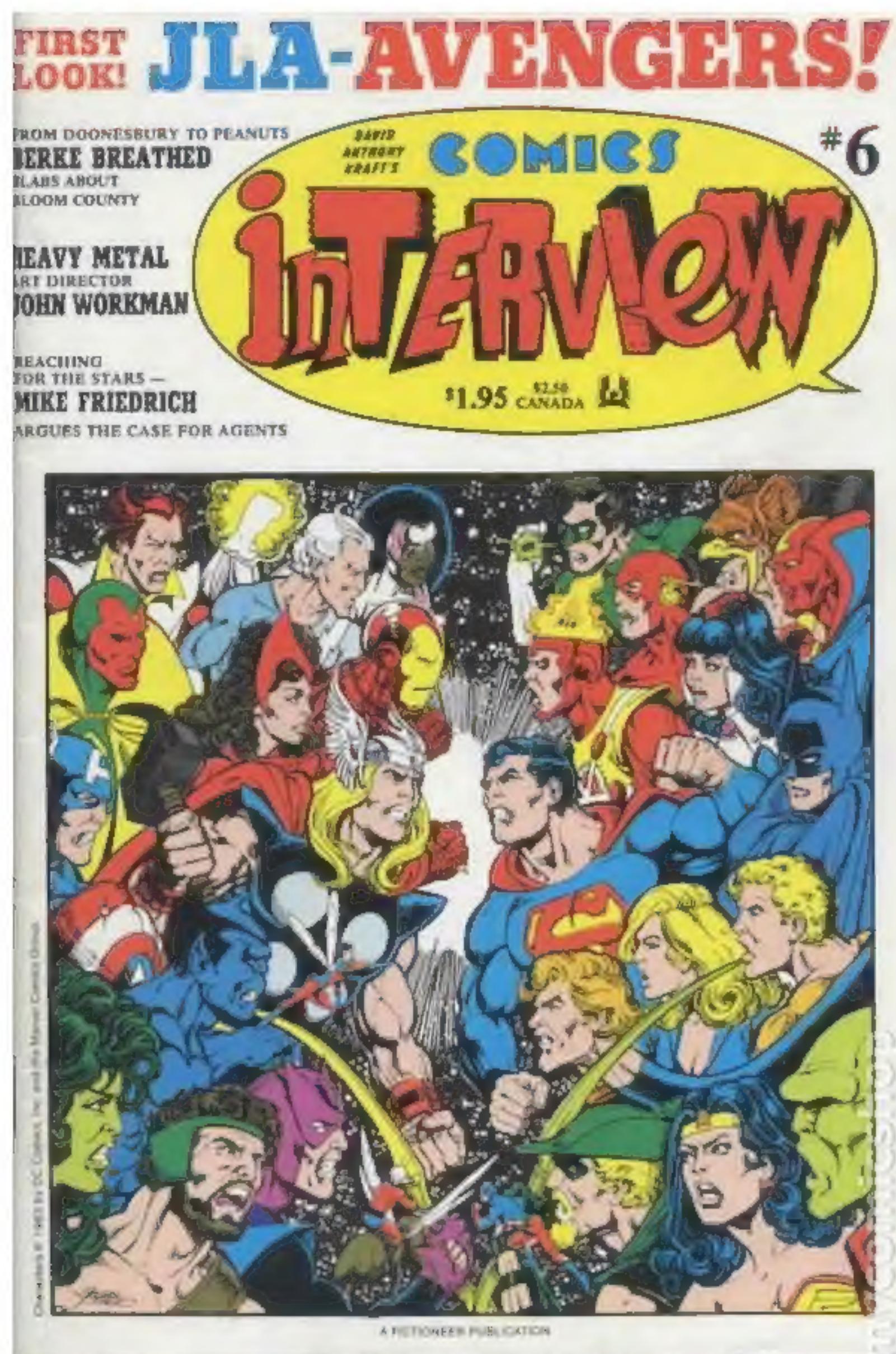


The Original Plot For The Unfinished JLA/AVENGERS Crossover



It's one of the great unfinished symphonies in the history of comics. After having successfully teamed up Superman and Spider-Man twice, Batman and the Incredible Hulk, and the X-Men and the New Teen Titans, in 1983 Marvel and DC were prepared to release JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA VS THE AVENGERS, uniting their two flagship teams in a single crossover book. Of the greatest excitement was the fact that this book was being illustrated by George Perez, who was not only just about the most popular artist in the business but who also had a history of working on both groups. In the end, the project was troubled and it never came to fruition—I don't have enough time here to give chapter-and-verse on it, something that I may cover at some later date. But the key mistake made was that DC, who were producing the book, gave a green light to George to start drawing writer Gerry Conway's plot before it had officially been approved by Marvel. This led to in-fighting among the two companies, as Marvel's team didn't feel that the plot worked as written. Eventually, Roy Thomas was brought in to revise the plot in an attempt to get the project back on track (and to use the 21 pages that George had already penciled.) But it was all for nothing—the window of Perez's availability had closed, and the book was never finished.

So the question remains: was Gerry's plot so awful, so unusable, that the Marvel team was right to ask for extensive revisions? If you speak to those involved—Jim Shooter, Tom DeFalco, the late Mark Gruenwald, Roger Stern—the answer is undeniably yes. And in any event, it was a massive breach of protocol for DC editor Len Wein to have Perez proceed on drawing it before Marvel had signed off. Still, the proof is in the pudding—and I happen to have a copy of that original plot, which I will now share with all of you. It definitely has some problems in it, some stupid or ill-considered moments. But it also looks to my eye like the sort of thing that could have easily been corrected with a simple revision. Then again, I wasn't there, and I don't know all of the ins-and-outs of who said and who did what when. All I know is that everybody was deprived the pleasure of this book existing because two groups of people couldn't come together and agree on something. And if there's anything more 2022 than that, I don't know what it is.

(GEORGE--as per your wishes, I've left the battle choreography to you, with some notes as to specific things that should happen in each confrontation. Have fun. --Ger.)

OUR STORY OPENS AT THE END OF TIME...

Time and space converge in a whirlpool effect, funneling down, down, down into a pinpoint of reality--and then vanishing into that pinpoint as if into a black hole.

Toward this pinpoint travel two time-faring vessels: one, under the control of KANG THE CONQUEROR; the other, guided by the LORD OF TIME.

Since the end of time exists at only one moment in time, both of these time-lords arrive at it simultaneously--even though they departed centuries apart.

THEIR SENSORS detect each others vessels; immediately, they fire TEMPORAL TORPEDOES at each other, weave and spin about in evasive maneuvers, all the while heading toward their destination--the end of time.

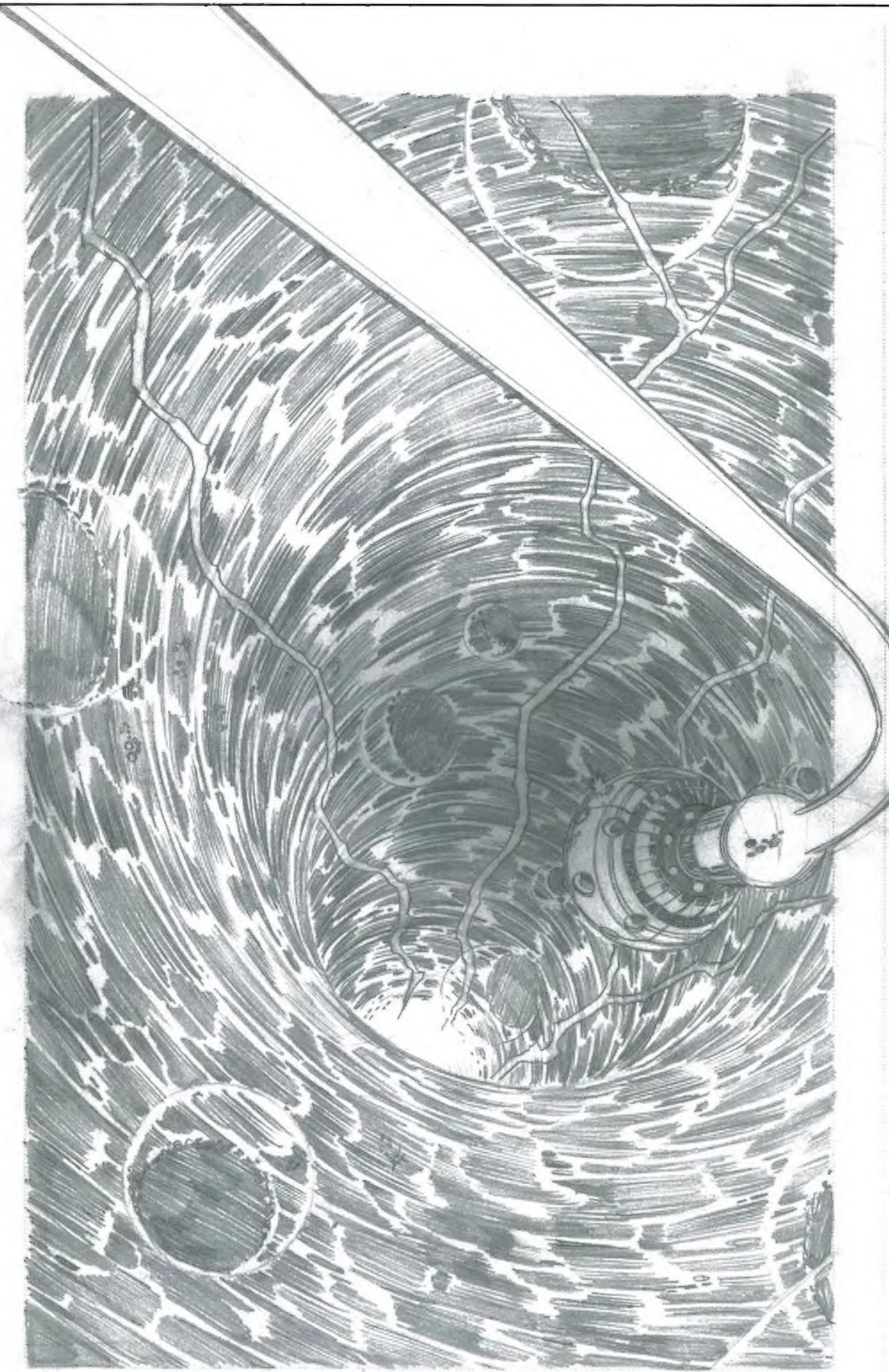
Neither gets the upper hand; they vanish together into the cataclysmic vortex--

AND WE CUT TO:

THE AVENGERS MANSION, established at NIGHT, as SOMETHING BRIGHT, like a SMALL STAR, flickers into existence above the mansion--

INSIDE, in the KITCHEN, HAWKEYE is raiding the refrigerator for some late-night munchies after a workout in the exercise room-- so he's in costume, a little sweaty-- when AN ALARM GOES OFF, causing him to spin around, drop his plates with a crash-- and after a glance at a SITUATION MONITOR BOARD that appears from behind a sliding panel on the kitchen wall, showing the location of the INTRUDER who set off the alarm, HAWKEYE takes off at a run--grabbing his BOW & QUIVER from the cutting board table where he left them.

JARVIS is ahead of him, though, in his pajamas and bathrobe, coming down the stairs to the front hall--and down through a wall from her



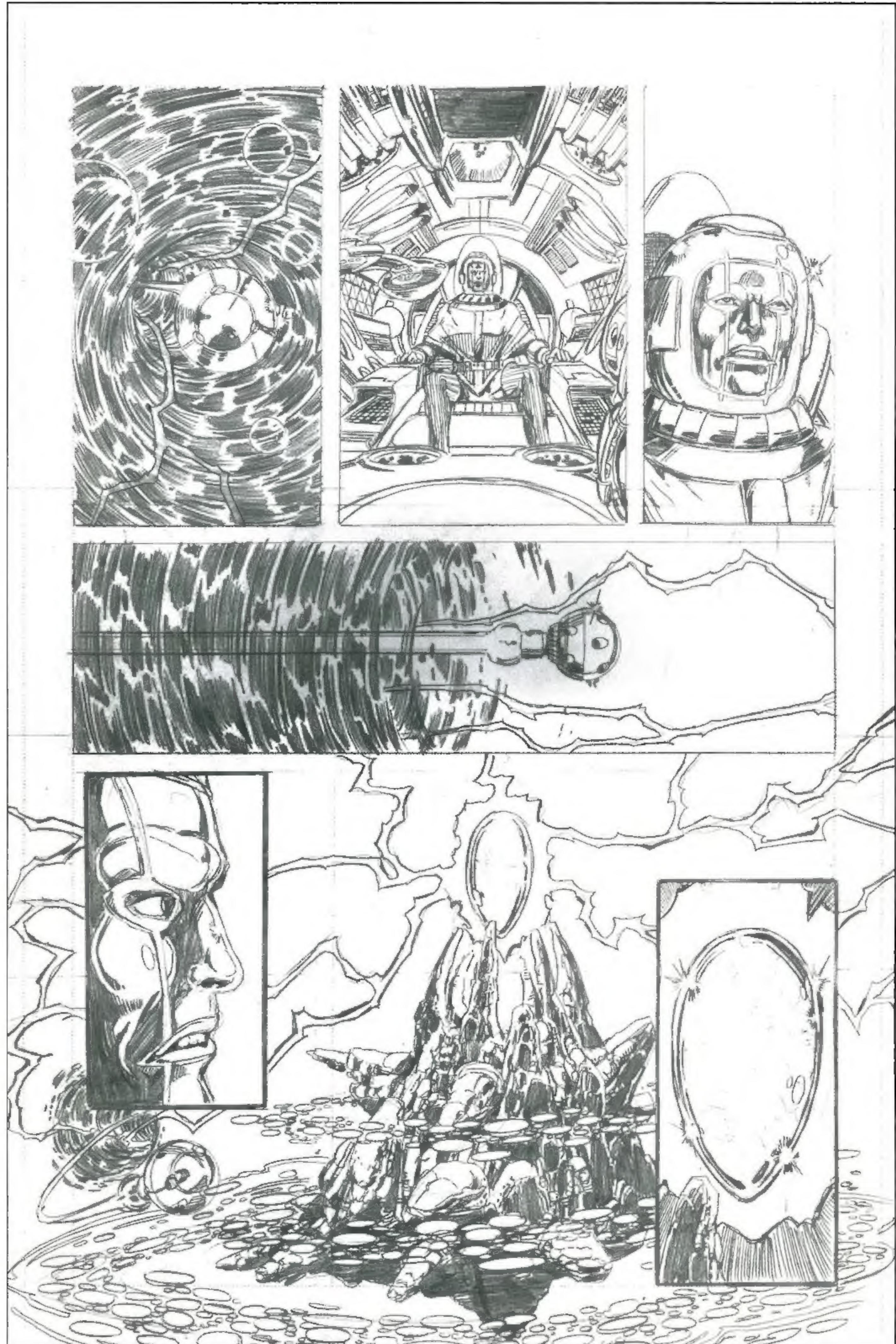
own room comes CAPTAIN MARVEL in light energy form, also converging on the front door AND BECOMING MATERIAL--and as HAWKEYE runs into view, he, CM and JARVIS are ALL hit by ENERGY BLASTS from the doorway, which PARALYZE THEM in mid-stride and mid-run, so that they FALL OVER like statues, with a CLUNK--

BEST
AND NOW OTHER AVENGERS run onto the scene: THE BEAST, SHE-HULK, STAR FOX, coming from various spots around the MANSION (INTERCUT above sequence with their reactions as they hear the alarms--BEAST is watching TV in his room, SHE-HULK is lifting weights in the rec room, STAR FOX is out back smelling flowers in the garden, absorbing the earth ambiance)--

--BUT THEY DODGE the energy blasts from the doorway: SHE-HULK rips up a section of flooring as a shield and BEAST rebounds off walls to avoid a pair of blasts, and STAR FOX zooms up and over the blast aimed at him, his momentum carrying him THROUGH the open front door and INTO the attacker on the other side:

CRASH--and down goes STAR FOX in a tangle with a HEAVILY ARMORED CHARACTER in the familiar colors of THE LORD OF TIME; the character is stunned, and as the unparalyzed AVENGERS surround him, THE BEAST lifts off the armored helmet--revealing the LORD OF TIME inside the heavy armored battle outfit. LORD OF TIME blinks up at them bleerily and says, "I need your help." SHE-HULK growls, "You've got a funny way of asking, buster."

CUT TO: AVENGERS MEETING HALL, as the REST of the AVENGERS in this story arrive, WASP already here and in charge of the meeting, HAWKEYE and CAPTAIN MARVEL both stretching aching muscles, TIME LORD the center of attention, sitting cowed and guarded by SHE-HULK apart from the conference table. The arriving AVENGERS are: THOR, CAPTAIN AMERICA, IRON MAN, THE VISION, SCARLET WITCH. After they've greeted each other and settled down, all are surprised when THREE MORE heroes arrive, let in by JARVIS (who's in his butler clothes now, a little achy too): HERCULES,



ANT-MAN and QUICKSILVER... QUICKSILVER speeds in as a blur, greets SCARLET WITCH affectionately, shakes VISION'S hand a little uncertainly. Nobody realizes ANT-MAN is present until he flies past BEAST'S NOSE and causes him to SNEEZE. AVENGERS wonder why these three are here, and are bewildered when HERC and others say WASP invited them; WASP denies it, startled--

--and TIME LORD speaks up, saying that HE summoned them earlier in the evening, using HOLOGRAPHIC IMAGES of WASP. All now turn to him, angry, and demand an explanation; SHE-HULK is particularly threatening, and TIME LORD says, "It all started at the END OF TIME..."

CUT TO: JUSTICE LEAGUE SATELITE, high over the earth; inside, in the CONFERENCE ROOM, ELONGATED MAN calls a meeting to order--he's the current chairman. PRESENT are: SUPERMAN, BATMAN, GREEN ARROW, BLACK CANARY, FIRESTORM, RED TORNADO, ZATANNA, and THE FLASH. FIRESTORM, bored, is sitting with his legs up on the table, zapping nuclear bursts from his fingertip, like small fireworks; ZATANNA, beside him, whispers in his ear for him to cut it out; GREEN ARROW has his cap down over his eyes, and snores away--he had a late night; BC nudges him awake with an elbow to the ribs, as SUPERMAN looks on bemused; EL MAN calls for their attention, and asks WHO called the meeting--since it's not their regular monthly get-together.

AROUND THE TABLE, one after another, EVERYONE denies summoning the others--and just when everyone realizes that NOBODY called the meeting, a TINY SPOT OF ENERGY appears over the table and slowly EXPANDS into the image of a HUMAN FIGURE--as HEROES react, FS falling over backward in surprise, GA stringing an arrow to his bow, shocked; EL MAN recoiling rubberily; ZATANNA throwing up her hands in a mystic spell gesture to ward off evil; SUPERMAN on his feet, fists cocked; but before anyone can do anything, the IMAGE TAKES FORM--

--as KANG THE CONQUEROR, floating several inches off the table, not there in reality.



THEY DON'T RECOGNISE HIM--demand an explanation; KANG tells them he's come for their help--the fate of all time and space hangs in the balance. VARIED REACTIONS--surprise, disbelief, confusion.

KANG says he's ready to explain, but first he wants EVERYONE he needs to be there: snaps his fingers, and around the room there are SEVERAL BURSTS OF ENERGY, and out of these bursts step very bewildered: THE MARTIAN MANHUNTER, GREEN LANTERN, THE ATOM, and HAWKMAN. Each is startled, apparently transported here in the middle of some other act.

NOW we are ready, says KANG--

CUT TO: THE RECREATION LOUNGE of the JLA SATELITE, as the heroes all sit, stand, sprawl around, listening to KANG'S IMAGE as he explains why he's come to them.

FLASHBACK BEGINS--from KANG'S POV--relating BRIEFLY how he and TIME LORD arrived at the end of time, and continuing up to the moment they passed through that final cataclysm. Now a more detailed FLASHBACK continues:

--as KANG and TIMELORD'S SHIPS appear in NOTHINGNESS on the other side of time: floating in emptiness on either side of a relatively small (maybe a few dozen feet in diameter) PROTO-SPHERE, which glows like a giant pearl in the emptiness of non-time.

KANG and the LORD OF TIME leave their respective ships in temporal-survival suits, approach the sphere from opposite sides: clearly this is what they've come here to get, and neither man wants the other to have it. Clearly, they consider it a source of great power. KANG, the more grandiose of the two, the man with a great sense of personal destiny, wants the LORD OF TIME to just give up and head home; but the LORD OF TIME is a technocrat, a believer in his own machines if not himself, and defies KANG by firing a BLAST OF ENERGY from his weapon--which KANG dodges; and suddenly the two of them are blasting away from either side of the sphere--

--and in the midst of their shootout, blasts from each of their weapons STRIKE the sphere, with



TERRIFIC EXPLOSIVE FORCE.

CHARGED with TEMPORAL ENERGY from their weapons, the SPHERE IMPLODES OUT OF THIS CONTINUUM-- vanishing in a speedy multi-image back along the stream of time, as the two time-lords gape after it in disbelief...then at each other.

KANG raises his hand--but not to shoot: he offers his hand to the LORD OF TIME in truce. They have to compare notes, to see how they can TRACE the proto-sphere. Then it'll be every man for himself.

CUT TO: KANG'S CITADEL, as TIME-LORD and KANG work away at their time-sensors, trying to trace the proto-sphere.

TIME-LORD reacts as he sees something on the microscope-like scanner he's using to probe time:

IT'S THE SPHERE, plunging back through the time stream--

Meanwhile, KANG TOO reacts, but less obviously, to a MONITOR SCREEN GRAPH which projects the sphere's progress through time: graph shows that sphere will "skip" like a stone across several spots in time and space--making ~~five~~ different "stops" before plunging finally to the beginning of time. KANG realizes that these "stops" will provide the best opportunity for seizing the sphere.

BUT, BEFORE KANG can act--he is STRUCK FROM BEHIND by one of the LORD OF TIME'S energy bolts, shot from the TIMELORD'S BELT BUCKLE, activated by a touch of fingertip to buckle. KANG sprawls as THE LORD OF TIME vanishes back to his own era, using a mini-time transporter on his belt. KANG looks up, raging, as TIMELORD vanishes--and SWEARS he will not let TIMELORD gain the protosphere.

CUT TO: PRESENT, as KANG'S IMAGE finishes his story, making a GESTURE at a WALL MONITOR SCREEN, which now ACTIVATES on its own, to heroes' surprise, showing that same TIME SCREEN GRAPH with the ~~five~~ "time stops" where the proto-sphere will momentarily materialize in reality. At these ~~five~~ spots in time and space, the proto-sphere may be captured; KANG knows, from using his time scanner, that THE LORD OF TIME has made contact with THE AVENGERS, asking them to get



the sphere for him; in turn, KANG has come to the JLA for help, since only they have sufficient power to confront the AVENGERS membership.

GA speaks up--"Do you take us for dummies? Why should we or the Avengers help either of you creeps?"

KANG smiles wickedly: "Because if you do not capture the proto-sphere before it reaches the beginning of time, it will destroy all time and space. You have no choice but to help me; besides, you will convince yourselves that, in the end, you will find some way to avoid giving me the proto-sphere. You have too much pride to turn this challenge down." Or words to that effect.

THE HEROES look at each other, realizing the truth of what KANG says, and on that note we CUT TO:

THE TIME STREAM, where we see a LARGE TRANSPARENT GLOBE speeding backward through time, bearing inside it THE AVENGERS, riding on different levels within the multi-leveled globe; THE LORD OF TIME controls the time machine from a control chair floating in the center of the globe. Beside him are SHE-HULK and THE WASP, guarding him.

TIMELORD explains they're coming up on the first of the ~~five~~ 4 drop-points where the PROTO-SPHERE will appear; he's set his time machine to arrive about ~~ten~~ ^{THE} hour before the proto-sphere is due. WASP looks around, telling CAPTAIN AMERICA, HERCULES and STAR FOX to get ready: CAP has a SENSOR DEVICE given him by TIME LORD; with it he'll be able to locate the proto-sphere when it appears. He and his companions poise by a glowing spot on the bottom of the globe, ready to drop through at WASP'S COMMAND--and like a paratrooper commander giving the signal when a GREEN LIGHT FLASHES on TIMELORD'S CONTROL BOARD, WASP brings her hand down in a sharp gesture, and the three heroes DROP THROUGH THE GLOWING CIRCLE in the globe's bottom--vanishing one after the other as if into a receptive pool:

CHAPTER ONE begins--about forty feet up over the GERMAN TRENCHES at FLANDERS in WORLD WAR I,



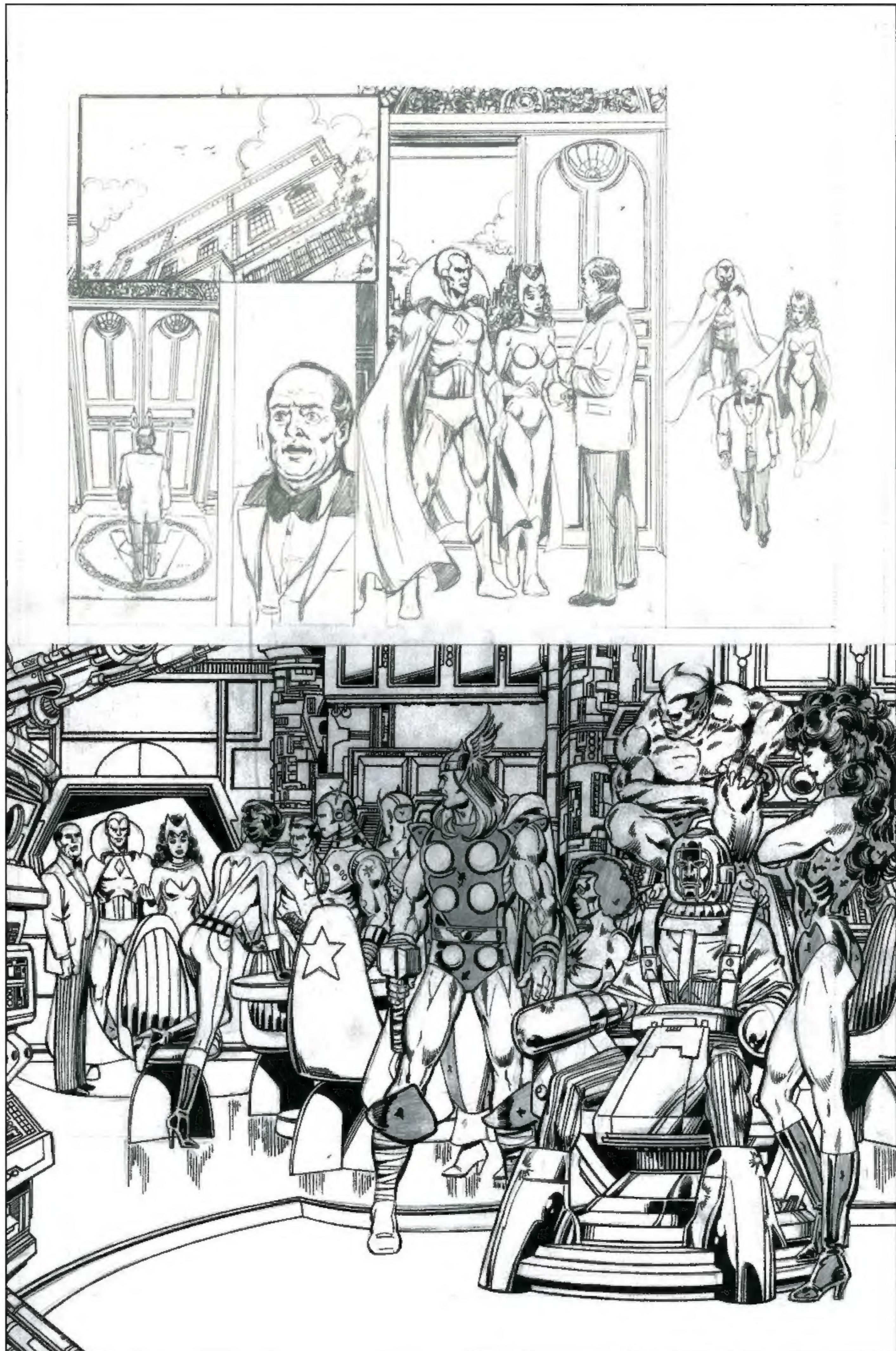
--HERC, CAP and STAR FOX drop through a circular one-dimensional time-warp into mid-air, as STARBURST BOMBS explode in the air around them, artillery shells bursting nearby, machine gun fire ripping the night sky, men screaming and dying out in no man's land.

CAP summersaults to the ground, narrowly avoiding a mass of BARBED WIRE; HERCULES isn't so lucky, and gets tangled in the stuff, to his annoyance. HERC rips the barbed wire apart, throwing the supports away. STAR FOX swoops down, to land in a trench between two GERMAN SOLDIERS who gape at him in disbelief; STAR FOX stares around him in horror, bewildered by the suffering of wounded soldiers, the explosions of shells hitting nearby, the rat-tat-tat of machine gun fire. THE SOLDIERS, grimey, wild-eyed, flee from him; STAR FOX hears a moan, turns to a DYING YOUNG BOY, and kneels beside him in horror, tears running down his cheeks--what kind of horrible place is this?

CAP, meanwhile, dives to avoid machine gun fire from a nearby trench; landing in the mud, he rolls to join HERCULES, who crouches bewildered in a shell-hole. "Where are we?" HERC wants to know; "WORLD WAR ONE," Cap answers bitterly. "The war to end all wars." HERC glances at him--and at just that moment AN ARTILLERY GUN THUNDERS OFF PANEL, and a SHELL drops toward them. HERC, startled, catches the shell--and it plows him back into the mud.

HERC, covered by muck, struggles to climb out of the mud--a HAND grasps his and pulls; he comes up, coughing, to find himself face-to-face with WONDER WOMAN, who wryly offers her apologies before SMASHING him with a roundhouse blow.

CAP, meanwhile, sprawls a short distance away, ears ringing from the shell's impact--and SPOTS a weird, BATLIKE creature running across no-man's land--toward the A GLOWING CRATER-HOLE. CAP glances at his sensor device, which blinks like a geiger counter; that's where the PROTO-SPHERE is, in that crater, and the bat-like creature is heading



straight for it.

CAP runs, dodges, dives and rolls across no-man's land, and TACKLES the bat-creature as it's about to reach the glowing crater; it's no creature, of course, it's BATMAN. They fight now, on the edge of the crater; inside the crater, glowing eerily, is the PROTO-SPHERE, sitting at the crater's bottom like some huge pearl.

STAR-FOX, meanwhile, hears CAP'S SHOUT for help--and pulls out of his funk to fly up out of the trench: only to get hit in mid-air by HAWKMAN. He and HAWKMAN fight, as below WONDER WOMAN and HERCULES trade blows, hurl barbed wire at each other, duck shells and machine gun bullets.

SOLDIERS on both sides of no man's land stop firing to gape at the weird, unearthly battle before them.

BATTLE REACHES A CLIMAX when WW defeats HERCULES and turns to help BATMAN; STAR FOX has beaten HAWKMAN, and dives at her from behind; BATMAN and CAP are in a draw, both about to fall into the crater where the PROTO-SPHERE glows; WW is tackled by STAR FOX, they crash into CAP and BATMAN; all plunge into the crater--

--just as the PROTO-SPHERE vanishes.

CAP and BATMAN react with dismay, as we CUT TO:

INTERLUDE SEQUENCE-- in KANG'S TIME-SHIP, more like a battleship than time lord's globe; ELONGATED MAN and KANG have been watching the battle in 1917 on a timescope scanner; disappointed, EL MAN asks KANG to pick up the JLAers-- and KANG refuses, reminds EL MAN they have to reach the next drop-point. No "time" to go back; the heroes can be picked up on the return voyage--if there is a return voyage. EL MAN angry about this, but KANG is unmoved; and this is HIS time-ship, after all. "We've coming up over DROP POINT TWO, says KANG: get your friends ready." EL MAN turns away, as KANG grins to himself; by the time they reach the BEGINNING OF TIME, there won't be enough heroes left aboard the time ship to stop KANG from doing whatever he wants with the proto-sphere.



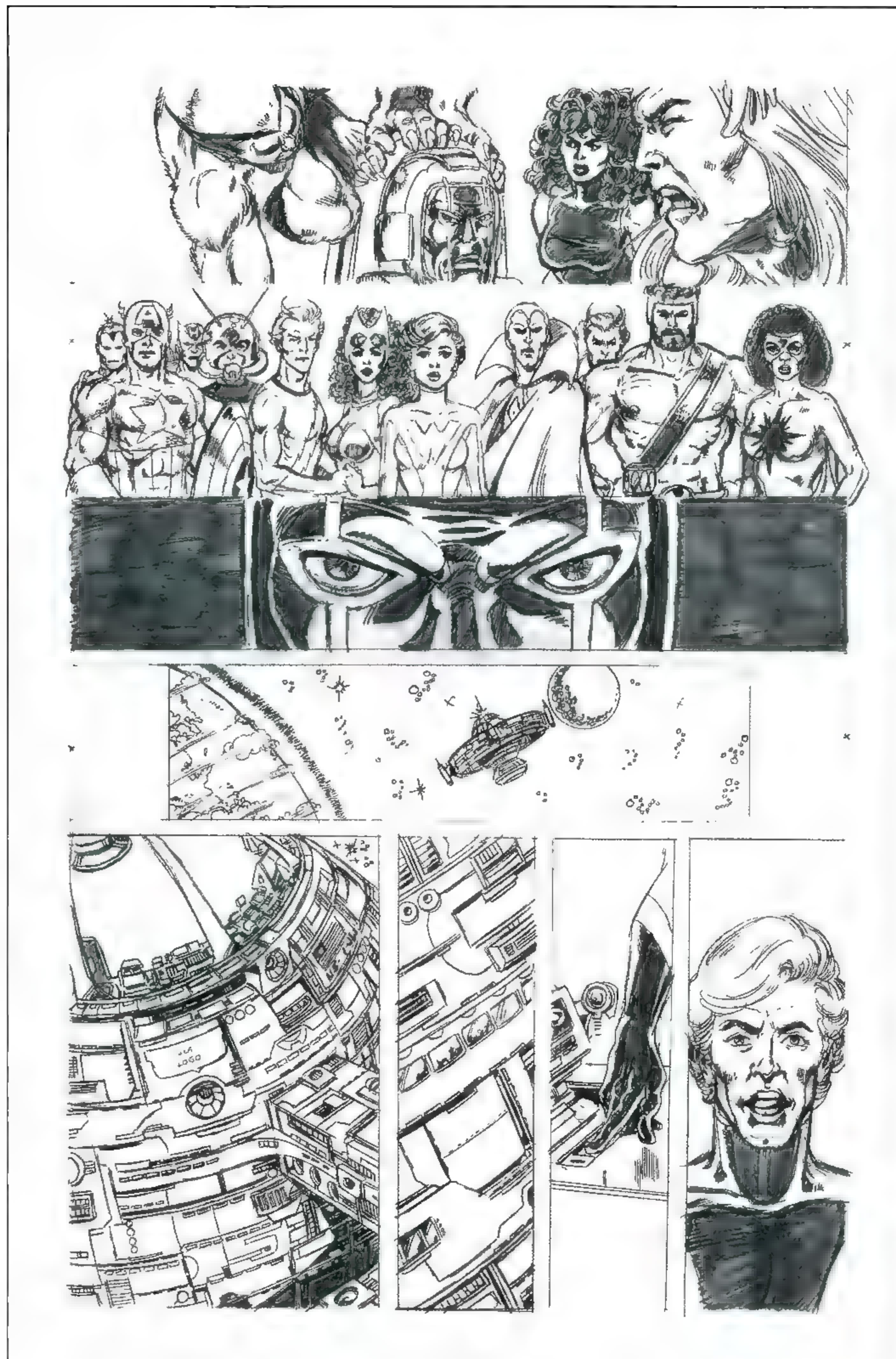
Everything's going perfectly.

CHAPTER TWO-- IN DEEP SPACE, on the gravitational border of a NEUTRON STAR--a star that's collapsed on itself to such a degree it takes up a volume of space less than that of a planet the size of JUPITER; but it's not a black hole--it radiates ENERGY, is surrounded by bands of magnetic and plasma energy fields, and is generally the closest thing to Hell we're likely to find in this universe. APPEARING through a TIME-SPACE WARP about ten million miles away from the star are the following heroes: J'ONN J'ONZZ, ZATANNA and FLASH; the MARTIAN MANHUNTER wears a spherical spacehelmet and air tanks--otherwise, no spacesuit; the others wear spacesuits that duplicate their costumes' designs to some degree. Dropping down with them is a small three-person SPACE VEHICLE with thrusters, transparent cockpit, etc--almost like a submersible.

MANHUNTER takes charge, as the one with the most experience in space--pilots them toward the NEUTRON STAR; they have to land on its surface, and are wearing appropriate gravity-offsetting devices on their outfits, which they double-check now as the vehicle swings around and heads down toward the HIGHLY ENERGIZED STAR-SURFACE.

(NOTE--If you find the notion of landing on a neutron star incredible, George, please know that several astrophysicists have speculated on landing an unmanned probe on such a star's surface; in fact, one physicist wrote an s-f novel about it called DRAGON'S EGG.)

MEANWHILE, down on the surface, we see an INHABITANT of that world--a huge, paper-thin black creature several hundred yards across shaped almost like a MANTA RAY, sliding across the bubbling radioactive surface toward a GLOWING CRATER containing we-know-what; apparently the heroes have arrived a few seconds later than they thought--undoubtedly their time-warp was thrown off kilter by the relativity distortions in surrounding space-time caused by the neutron star.



THE MANTA-THING probes at the crater--and at the PROTO-SPHERE now visible within--and suddenly RECOILS in surprise, as a SPEEDING BLUR cuts between it and the crater, throwing up energy-distortions like waves, causing the MANTA-THING to rear up: we think it's THE FLASH, but now, as the BLUR skids to a stop, we see it's QUICKSILVER in spacesuit.

MANTA-THING gropes toward QUICKSILVER like some huge flapping black TIDE--

--and is FLUNG BACK by a SUDDEN PUNCH, thrown by SHE-HULK, who drops into view beside QUICKSILVER.

MANTA-THING ripples in shock, and then flings itself on SHE-HULK, enwrapping her; now we see, above the manta-thing, the AVENGER'S SPACE VEHICLE, with SCARLET WITCH at the controls, hovering--it was from this vehicle that SHE-HULK and QUICKSILVER dropped.

QUICKSILVER speeds around the manta-thing, spewing up energy tides around its outer edge in an effort to distract it from crushing SHE-HULK: SHE-HULK is in its incredibly strong grip (remember, this thing has to survive incredible gravitational pressures to live on the surface of a neutron star). She's choking, being crushed, as SCARLET WITCH now dives the VEHICLE in a strafing-like run across the MANTA-THING, and is about to CAST A SPELL with one hand, mystic energy gathering--

--when SUDDENLY, a counter-spell from above hits her and the ship, and the ship tilts over, losing control, crashing into the surface of the star with a spectacular rill-forming EXPLOSION that flings WITCH free.

SHE WHIRLS, from the ground, to look up and see JLA VEHICLE diving from the weirdly-energy-banded night sky, two figures leaping from it: FLASH and MANHUNTER.

MANHUNTER goes for the crater as FLASH speeds toward QUICKSILVER, who's trying for an interception on MANHUNTER. FIGHT ENSUES, QUICKSILVER vs FLASH; meanwhile, WITCH gets a momentary breather to send a HEX BURST at the MANTA, freeing SHE-HULK, who flings



the MANTA onto MANHUNTER in the crater. MANHUNTER uses his invisibility powers to avoid the manta, who finally slinks off like a wounded animal, wanting no part of this mess; but MANHUNTER'S INVISIBILITY proves no good for long since there's so much energy in the air, and he shows up against it. SHE-HULK attacks him; they battle.

MEANWHILE, WITCH has managed to zap ZATANNA in the JLA VEHICLE; but ZATANNA keeps it from crashing with her magic, and the two mystics fight it out.

CLIMAX comes when FLASH uses his greater experience to drop QUICKSILVER; WITCH has beaten ZATANNA; MANHUNTER has overcome SHE-HULK; and the three SURVIVORS dive together for the proto-sphere from three different directions--

--only to have it vanish away from their collective grasp.

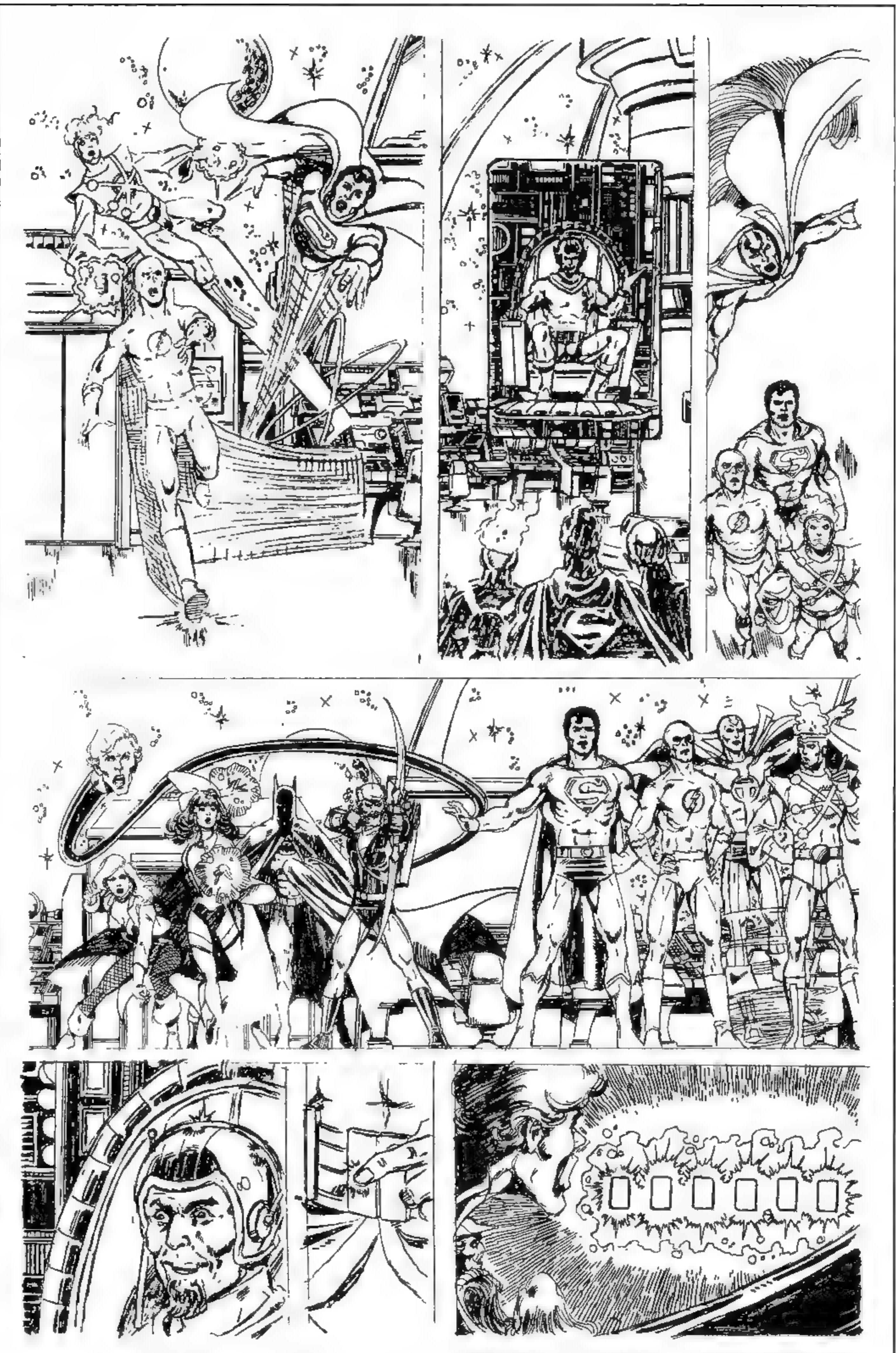
IN DEFEAT, the six of them decide to work together to get off the star; but MANHUNTER is pessimistic, looking at their vehicles--if they're not rescued by the time travelers, they may be trapped on this star, far in the past, forever. WITCH notices something that shocks her--the BATTERY PACK each of them wears to supply energy for their gravity suits is RUNNING LOW. If they aren't rescued soon...any future rescue will come too late. GRIM LAST SHOT of this sequence as the six new allies realize they may be in very deep trouble indeed...

INTERLUDE--Aboard the LORD OF TIME'S TIME-GLOBE...

HAWKEYE takes a bead on the LORD OF TIME, as WASP and IRON MAN react, startled--HAWKEYE tells TIMELORD he better turn back and save the marooned heroes on the neutron star, or else:

TIMELORD quavers--almost pathetically--staring at the arrow aimed at him, says he cannot turn back, there's no time. HAWKEYE doesn't believe it; with a machine like this, TIMELORD could go back to save the heroes and STILL reach the next drop-point on "time"--

WASP, IRON MAN try to reason with HAWKEYE--tell him they have



to work with timelord for the sake of the cosmos; the other heroes on the control level, THOR and ANT-MAN, look on skeptically; THOR speaks up, takes HAWKEYE'S side, says he believes TIMELORD is playing a double game, and wants to know what TIMELORD is up to. ANT-MAN, with a pair of ants, sits watching all this, unable to make up his mind who is right.

Finally WASP takes full command, telling HAWKEYE and THOR to back off; she's the leader, and this is no time for a vote--too much is at stake.

NOW ANOTHER VOICE chimes in, from a MONITOR SCREEN: it belongs to THE VISION, who waits below on the drop-circle with CAPTAIN MARVEL and THE BEAST, the three of them getting ready to drop onto the next time-point.

VISION makes an eloquent statement on WASP's behalf--all the more eloquent because it is his wife, SCARLET WITCH, who has been left behind. He says they must go on, no matter what the sacrifice.

HAWKEYE is ashamed when he hears this--particularly since he once had a crush on WANDA, years ago, and here the VISION, who also loves her, is reminding him that facing death was a choice WANDA made of her own free will; and that they must support that choice, no matter how much pain it causes them. Else her sacrifice would have been in vain.

WASP tells TIMELORD to proceed, as HAWKEYE puts up his bow; but HAWKEYE and THOR exchange a meaningful glance--they're going to keep an eye on TIMELORD for any tricks. They don't trust this guy one bit. And we CUT TO:

CHAPTER THREE-- THE KREE HOMeworld in the year 800 AD; already a space-faring race, culturally like Elizabeathan England with star travel and suitable technology--a bold race just beginning to feel its way into the galactic ocean.

CM, VISION and BEAST appear on the outskirts of a KREE CITY-- the premier city of its day, with a bustling spaceport, many alien races, etc.



CM is awed; for her, this is almost a religious experience-- being here, where her progenitor was born, visiting the KREE WORLD during one of its greatest historical moments.

VISION, naturally, is unmoved; BEAST is amused by CM's fan-like attitude. They hitch a ride on a passing HOVERCRAFT-FREIGHT WAGON piloted by a crusty KREE farmer; their appearance doesn't earn them a second glance--the KREE are becoming used to all kinds of weird looking aliens.

VISION checks his sensor device as they ride in the back among weird KREE livestock; according to device, the PROTO-SPHERE will appear at a point near the heart of the city. CM wonders where it'll be--in a marketplace, on a rooftop, where? BEAST wryly remarks that with their luck, it'll land right in the middle of the local high church.

THEY ENTER the city aboard the hovercraft--and are OBSERVED by three CLOAKED FIGURES amid the thronging crowds of alien races: GREEN LANTERN, RED TORNADO and ELONGATED MAN. GL's ring suddenly starts glowing, just then; he can't understand it--it's reacting as if there were some nearby source of incredible POWER BATTERY ENERGY...but that seems impossible.

He shrugs it off and follows EL MAN and REDDY through the crowd after the three AVENGERS, who have left the hovercraft wagon and are making their way through the city's winding streets. UNKNOWN to GL, however, two SMALL FIGURES are watching him from a nearby balcony-- looking on with surprise and concern: two GUARDIANS OF OA, wondering aloud to each other what a GREEN LANTERN is doing here--a GREEN LANTERN they've never seen before! ONE comments--"His presence could upset everything. We must attend, and remain alert."

CUT TO: BEAST, VISION & CM making their way through the crowds--noticing KREE SOLDIERS striding purposefully through the throngs in the same direction they're taking; VISION checks his SENSOR, which shows an URGENT BLINKING-- indicating that the proto-sphere is about to arrive up ahead. But how to



get through the crowd, asks BEAST, which is getting very thick now, everyone apparently streaming in the same direction as our group--

--and, in answer, VISION takes off, going IMMATERIAL to slip through a stone archway, CM following him as light-energy, leaving BEAST to leap over heads, bounce off walls, find a ledge and run along it, hurrying to keep up:

AND THEN REACTING, IN CLOSE-UP, as he turns a corner on a second-story ledge to see their destination, and it leaves him gaping and whispering, "Aw, no, not there--"

BIG SHOT--ahead, on the far side of a PLAZA, is a HUGE EMBASSY BUILDING belonging to the SKRULL, with suitably non-KREE architecture; fronted by high energy gates and guarded by SKRULL WARRIORS in uniform, who snarl and glare at the ANGRY CROWD which gathers around the gate as KREE SOLDIERS make their way to the gate through the throng, pushing people aside--VISION and CM flying toward this, BEAST bouncing and leaping from ledge to alien lamp-post, jumping over heads and vehicles to arrive with VISION & CM and SOLDIERS all more or less simultaneously--

--at the GATES, where a KREE CHILD and his MOTHER lie, apparently struck down by a BIG SKRULL WARRIOR named DAKON; he holds a weapon like a energized quarterstaff; and coming into confrontation with him is a tall, handsome KREE SOLDIER who is identified by his platoon as LIEUTENANT VELL; he's a direct ancestor of MAR-VELL, of course; as CM quickly figures out during this scene.

AS VISION, CM & BEAST listen from nearby, CM reacting to all this with shock--she realizes this must be the origin of the KREE-SKRULL WAR; or at least, one of the inciting incidents--VELL confronts DAKON, demanding an explanation--DAKON says the woman trespassed on SKRULL EMBASSY property, and to teach the KREE UPSTARTS a lesson, she was struck down. VELL demands she be handed over, with her child; but DAKON steps between VELL and the woman's stunned form, saying no, she's on SKRULL territory--no one trespasses, not even



a KREE soldier.

CONFRONTATION--tension--everything looking grim indeed--and at just that moment, VISION notices his SENSOR--blinking furiously--as, beyond the gates, on SKRULL EMBASSY GROUNDS, the PROTO-SPHERE suddenly appears in mid-air, on the fly, plowing partially into the SKRULL EMBASSY, a terrific impact which craters the ground and flings everyone in the plaza to the dirt with shock waves.

EVERYONE, that is, except VISION, who now dives past the stunned and startled DAKON, through the gates and into the SKRULL EMBASSY GARDEN--

--which causes DAKON, recovering, to let out a terrific ROAR and strike out at VISION--

--only to have CM block his staff with her light-form body--

--while BEAST launches into him, feet first, smashing him into VELL, who's getting to his own feet.

DAKON goes down; VELL responds instinctively by throwing the SKRULL WARRIOR over his shoulder.

INSTANTLY, ALL HELL BREAKS LOOSE between the SKRULL and the KREE--

CITIZENS scatter--

CM hangs back, watching the battle between VELL and DAKON, realizing now that VELL must be the MAR-VELL's ancestor; something VELL says while struggling with DAKON makes her realize this.

BEAST, meanwhile, starts to leap over the SKRULL GUARDS, leapfrogging, and is about to go over the energy-fence when EL MAN'S STRETCHING ARM wraps around him in mid-air and yanks him away.

EL MAN stretches into view, and ZOOMING PAST him on his vortex comes RED TORNADO, going over the fence and intercepting VISION.

EL MAN and BEAST fight; BEAST is frantic to help VISION, but EL MAN keeps him wrapped up, bouncing around, using his gymnastic ability against EL MAN's stretching powers.

MEANWHILE, CM--forgetting the reason she's here--launches herself at VELL and DAKON, who battle as their soldiers lock horns; but



suddenly she HITS a POWER RING WALL thrown up by GL, and turns to find herself in confrontation with GL.

THEY FIGHT--

While, watching all this, the GUARDIANS OF OA stand like rocks in the midst of the fleeing crowd at the plaza's other end, people breaking into twin streams on either side of them, not even brushing into them.

CM & GL fight--CM desperately tries to make GL understand they have a chance to stop centuries of warfare before they can begin, here and now, if they can just stop SKRULL and KREE from warring; that's what she wants to do--that's all she cares about at this instant. GL, breaking off combat, realizes the truth of what she says, turns his power ring on DAKON as CM swoops in to pull VELL away. GL holds DAKON in a green power bubble--

--but just then, THE GUARDIANS speak from behind him, tell him he MUST NOT interfere: they have their own reasons--this war must ~~go~~ occur as expected.

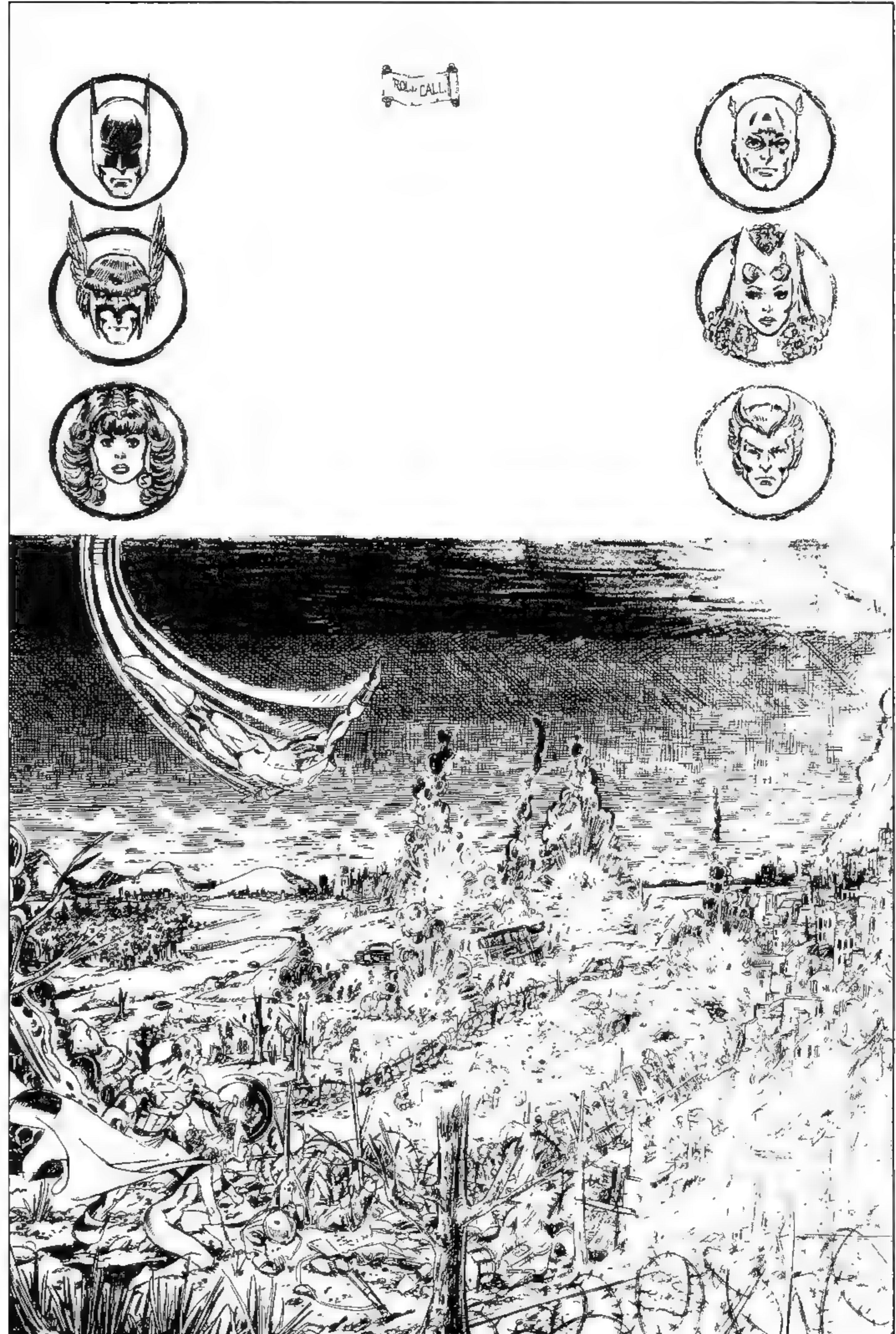
GL is torn--CM, seeing that he's wavering, BEGS him to help--but GL'S determination fades under the GUARDIANS' stare--and he pulls back, his POWER RING BUBBLE fades, and DAKON roars with fury, attacking VELL, whom CM releases in time to defend himself; she's near tears over this, and now throws herself on GL.

MEANWHILE, REDDY fights VISION--and fight ends when VISION sticks a hand through REDDY'S CHEST, from in front, and out his back; power sparks, REDDY goes down.

VISION turns to the PROTO-SPHERE--only to have EL MAN lasso him with an arm; EL MAN'S other arm, we see, is wrapped around BEAST, holding him cacooned, mummy-wrapped, unable to fight.

VISION DODGES--goes immaterial--and DIVES into the proto-sphere just as it VANISHES back into the time-stream.

CM, GL arrive, all gaping at place where VISION and SPHERE vanished; GL turns on GUARDIANS, demanding an explanation of their behavior--but THEY TOO are vanishing--



disappear--

--and the remaining HEROES suddenly find themselves alone: but not quite, as we PULL BACK to see them SURROUNDED BY SKRULL WARRIORS, even as the heroes realize they're surrounded, and thus in deep, deep trouble. That's our cue to CUT TO:

INTERLUDE--aboard KANG'S SHIP...

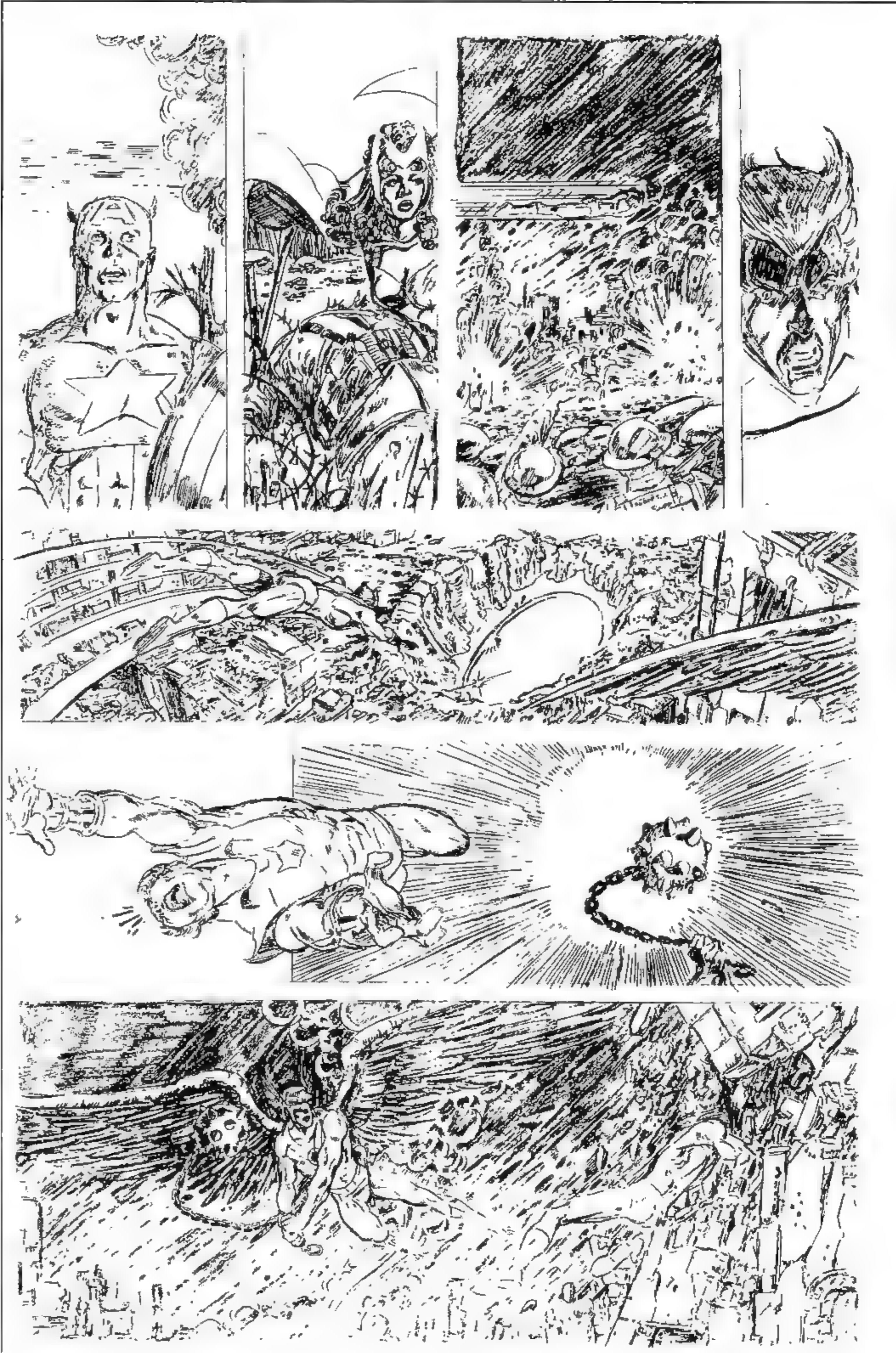
The remaining JLAers react with shock to what they've seen on KANG'S TIME MONITOR; SUPERMAN, GREEN ARROW, BLACK CANARY, FIRESTORM, ATOM are the only ones left--

ALL turn to SUPERMAN for leadership now, and he turns on KANG, grimly telling KANG that he'll have a lot to answer for when this is over. KANG simply smiles...and points to a BLINKING BOARD LIGHT that indicates they're approaching their next drop-point; this one SUPERMAN will have to take--only HE is powerful enough to deal with the potential menace he may encounter. What menace? SUPERMAN wants to know; KANG cryptically tells him he'll find out soon enough--he and ATOM.

CHAPTER FOUR--IN ORBIT over an earthlike PLANET, SUPERMAN and THE ATOM appear through their space-time warp, ATOM in a spacesuit--and directly beneath them is a MONSTROUS, NEAR-PLANET SIZED ALIEN SPACECRAFT. This CRAFT is sending out TRACTOR BEAMS and PLANETARY DESTRUCTOR BEAMS that are literally tearing apart the planet below, and this planet-wrecking continues throughout this chapter until nothing is left of the planet, nothing at all.

SUPERMAN is stunned by the colossal size of the spacecraft and the incredible power of its energy beams; next to it, he seems no larger than THE ATOM next to a diesel locomotive. HE and ATOM head toward the ship, seeing an AIRLOCK glowing with light. They head for this airlock; SUPERMAN passes through first, going through an AIR-RETAINING ENERGY FIELD--

--directly into a mighty swing of THOR'S HAMMER; THOR is on the other side of the airlock, waiting for SUPES to enter; his blow smashes SUPES across the airlock chamber,



which is the size of a small football field.

ATOM immediately launches himself at THOR, grabbing THOR'S HAIR and yanking down, throwing THOR off balance--

--which gives SUPERMAN a chance to join the attack.

BUT NOW ATOM is attacked by ANT-MAN, and his FLYING ANTS; inside the airlock there's atmosphere so the ants can fly.

MEANWHILE, elsewhere, we see the great ship's SHUTTLE CRAFT swooping over the planetary landscape, as the SHIP'S OWNER, a silhouetted GIANT observes the work of the energy beams as they rip the planet apart; having seen enough, this GIGANTIC FIGURE decides it's time to return to his craft. Though we never see him completely, longtime fans will recognise the ship's owner, of course, as GALACTUS.

INTERCUT SHOTS OF GALACTUS'S SHUTTLE returning to the MOTHER SHIP with SCENES OF BATTLE between THOR and SUPERMAN; let out all the stops on this battle, which is a centerpiece of the story.

PARALLELING SUPERMAN'S FIGHT with THOR is the battle between ANT-MAN and ATOM, which takes them into the internal workings of the ship.

ANT-MAN knows by looking at the SENSOR DEVICE he carries strapped to his ant-steed's back that the PROTO-SPHERE is going to be appearing very soon somewhere inside this ship--and he tries to make his way through the CONDUITS and WIRING of the great spacecraft while ATOM pursues; occasionally they clash.

THOR & SUPERMAN, meanwhile, get separated, ending up on two different levels; SUPERMAN comes into a chamber, vast as a mountain valley, where DOZENS OF PLANETARY MODELS hover in mid-air, most are dark, but others glow with light, indicating that they still exist. TWO are spot-lighted; ONE is the planet we've seen below this ship--its light is BRIGHT RED. The other spotlit planet, to SUPERMAN'S SHOCK, glows with a BLUE LIGHT, marking it as NEXT IN LINE...



IT'S KRYPTON.

This out of time

SUPERMAN stands shocked, uncomprehending--and momentarily distracted, is laid low by THOR'S HAMMER flung from across the room. The hammer returns to THOR'S HAND, and THE THUNDER GOD steps closer--as SUPES rises, unhurt, ready to face the challenge. But THOR calls a halt; they share a common cause, after all, he says--though SUPERMAN is in the wrong, siding with KANG. SUPERMAN says something more or less similar in spirit--though of course, THOR is in the wrong, siding with the LORD OF TIME.

THOR notices SUPES' interest in KRYPTON MODEL--SUPES asks what it means--THOR, who's encountered GALACTUS before, says it means that that world is the next in line to be destroyed to feed GALACTUS.

BEFORE SUPERMAN can react--there's an IMPLOSION OF AIR behind them; they whirl together--to see THE PROTO-SPHERE appear: but it doesn't solidify for even an instant--they get a brief glimpse of VISION in agony inside the sphere--and then it vanishes; just as ATOM and ANT-MAN arrive on the scene, too late.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? THOR wants to know; ATOM grimly says it means they missed their chance--and just then they hear a THROB OF ENORMOUS BOOTS in the hallway outside; GALACTUS'S SHIP has docked (show that above during the intercut) and now here comes GALACTUS himself...

WE HAVE TO GO, says THOR--he and ATOM & ANT-MAN all take off down a corridor; but SUPERMAN hangs back, and when they've gone from view, he uses his HEAT VISION on the model of KRYPTON, changing its contours, its geography. SHOW A MEMORY CUBE on the big computer board as DIGITAL INFORMATION also alters, in response to the changes on the model; SUPES has altered the computer's own memory of what planet is next in line.

NOW HE TOO leaves--distraught, shaken--ducking down a corridor just as BOOTTED FEET enter the chamber, narrowly escaping discovery.

ON SUPES, wondering if he's condemned a world to die in KRYPTON'S place--shaken by the moral



questions, but, like any of us, having no answers.

HE FLIES OUT of the corridor--and REELS IN SURPRISE as A BURST OF LIGHT from ahead ABSORBS HIM--and he vanishes; to where, and how, we don't yet know!

CUT TO--

INTERLUDE, in TIMELORD'S TIME-BUBBLE--

--as the LORD OF TIME frantically triple-checks his equipment, under HAWKEYE's impatient eye, an arrow aimed at his head; WASP on the other side, equally upset; IRON MAN grim, arms folded--all of them wanting to know what went wrong; and what happened to the HEROES--how could they all vanish in a flash of light, and why didn't the proto-sphere stay in position for the proper length of time?

HAWKEYE is ready to get violent, but WASP cools him off; finally TIMELORD looks up, sweaty, to explain that VISION'S PRESENCE inside the proto-sphere somehow pushed the sphere off-balance, disrupting TIMELORD's chronal calculations.

What about the rest of it? WASP wants to know; will the sphere end up at the beginning of time, or not?

TIMELORD checks--as IRON MAN, feeling a little out of it all, peers through the globe's transparent walls at the time stream. It's almost hypnotic.

TIMELORD examines his instruments--and BLANCHES; it's worse than before; with VISION inside the proto-sphere, the chances of a cosmic catastrophe rise to an almost dead certainty. TIMELORD panics--tries to break away from them, wants to flee; but HAWKEYE and WASP catch him, drag him back--notice that IM isn't moving, ask him what's wrong, and slowly he points out the FRONT of the globe:

AND THERE, WE SEE--A GIANT HAND OF STARS CUPPING GALAXIES, NEBULAE, PROTO-MATTER...

It's the image seen in the SECRET ORIGIN OF THE GUARDIANS; the primal force forming the universe--and they're approaching it. IM is stunned, disbelieving; TIMELORD is



almost a babbling wreck; WASP and HAWKEYE gape.

CUT TO--KANG'S TIME-SHIP...

--where KANG, GREEN ARROW, FIRESTORM and BLACK CANARY are having pretty much the same reaction seeing the PRIMAL HAND ahead--but KANG is no wreck; he remains in charge of his emotions, cool and calculating, studying his instruments and finally informing them that this is NOT the beginning of time, but rather a LATER STAGE after the beginning of time. He does not understand it, but they have nothing to fear.

FIRESTORM cracks wise, GA gives him an elbow in the ribs to shut up; all watch tensely as their TIME SHIP approaches the PRIMAL STAR-HAND--

--and simultaneously, TIMELORD'S TIME GLOBE also approaches the hand, the AVENGERS within reacting tensely--

--and BOTH SHIPS, NOW SIDE-BY-SIDE, pass through the hand and beyond:

TO THE BEGINNING OF TIME...

CHAPTER FIVE--It is much like the end of time, but where time's end seemed to be a whirlpool spinning inward, time's beginning is a slow-motion EXPLOSION OUTWARD, primal energy and matter erupting from a center point far, far ahead and expanding outward in all directions like some fantastic perspective shot. PLUNGING ON A COLLISION COURSE into this scene are TIMELORD'S GLOBE and KANG'S TIMESHIP--

--and in their separate crafts, TIMELORD and KANG react respectively to the realization they're going to crash, as the HEROES react--

BIG CRASH, the two time-ships colliding, in the midst of this outward explosion of time-and-space.

UTTER BLACKNESS FOLLOWS--

--and when it clears, we are FOCUSING ON GREEN ARROW as he comes around, and looks up in surprise to find himself sprawled with BLACK CANARY, FIRESTORM, KANG on a FEATURELESS BLACK PLAIN under a BLANK,



EMPTY WHITE SKY.

Not far away, also sprawling, waking, are HAWKEYE, WASP, IRON MAN and TIMELORD.

And DIRECTLY ABOVE THEM in the blank white sky, suspended like something out of SALVIDOR DALI--is the PROTO-SPHERE, with THE VISION trapped inside in the same posture of pain as seen in GALACTUS's starcraft.

KANG's eyes light up: there it is, the goal--so close he can almost touch it.

"Get it," he tells GA, BLACK CANARY & FS, who all groggily are getting to their feet; but where ARE we? BC wants to know. KANG replies, It's obvious--we're on the far side of time, before time's beginning. Nothing exists; nothing endures; nothing is. Nothing but us--and the sphere. He yells for them to get it before the AVENGERS can; groggy, uncertain, the heroes rush forward--

--and are MET by the AVENGERS; one on one.

TIMELORD, driven mad by terror, babbles on his knees; but WASP isn't about to give up the quest at this point.

"Back off," she tells the JLAers; "That's an AVENGER trapped in there. The sphere is ours, by right." She knows she isn't speaking rationally; but something about this place outside of time is eating at her mind. She practically snarls, ordering the JLAers away.

And for their part, the JLAers react EQUALLY irrationally-- --and the FINAL FIGHT (or perhaps, by paradox, the FIRST fight) BEGINS.

IRON MAN and FIRESTORM in contest--

WASP vs BLACK CANARY--

GA trading more and more bizarre arrows with HAWKEYE--

While TIMELORD gibbers--

And KANG makes his way across the plain toward the waiting proto-sphere; the heroes are so involved in their battle, KANG knows, no one will notice him until he's reached the proto-sphere. With it, he can take over all time and space; or

so he imagines.

As the battles reach their climax--with IRON MAN defeated by FIRESTORM, and WASP defeating BLACK CANARY--KANG is about to reach out and touch the proto-sphere...

Simultaneously, HAWKEYE and GA let fly with arrows aimed directly at each other; the arrows hit, deflect together at a right angle--

AND IMPACT into the PROTO-SPHERE just as KANG is about to touch it; HE SCREAMS with fury and disappointment as the PROTO-SPHERE EXPLODES!

BLINDING WHITE PANEL without sound, without detail--just the six heroes, KANG and TIMELORD, and THE VISION, flung in all directions by the EXPLODING WHITENESS OF THE PROTO-SPHERE.

CUT TO--THE JLA SATELITE, in the present.

SPRAWLED about the MONITOR ROOM are the JLAers and AVENGERS who competed in this issue; waking, stirring, looking about them in disbelief--they're back in the present, but how is that possible? What HAPPENED? HAWKEYE and GA exchange looks; SCARLET WITCH hugs THE VISION; GL gapes at his power ring as if suspecting it's responsible; WASP looks up, startled as--

A VOICE speaks all around them, and draws their attention to the HUGE WINDOWS which look out on space: and there, looming beside the satelite, is a HOLOGRAM IMAGE of--

--THE WATCHER!

He begs their forgiveness for interfering by returning them to their home-time; but he considers it truly a minor matter, since the eddies and tides of time might well have washed them up on their proper "shore" eventually. (It was HIS "white light" that absorbed SUPERMAN.) Gets very metaphysical here; FIRESTORM asks BEAST if he knows what WATCHER is talking about, BEAST shrugs.

WATCHER now explains that he was aware of their efforts and followed them back through time as an observer; tells them that what happened was destined to happen.

So what happened? HAWKEYE wants to know.

"You exploded the proto-sphere," WATCHER tells them; "And by doing so, you began the universe."

UTTER SILENCE as the heroes gape at each other and digest this.

Finally ELONGATED MAN asks...what about KANG and TIMELORD.

WATCHER smiles, says he felt he could not interfere in their fate; and so saying, vanishes, leaving the AVENGERS and JLAers to react to this last remark, until GA finally speaks up to offer everyone coffee... and this provokes a round of laughter at such a prosaic remark, and as everyone mingles and laughs and reacts we

CUT TO: THE BEGINNING OF TIME...

--where we see the EXPLODING MOMENT OF THE UNIVERSE'S ORIGIN; and we pull in closer and closer until at last we can see, TRAPPED in that eternal moment:

KANG and TIMELORD, screaming as the COSMOS ERUPTS AROUND THEM, destroying them as it creates itself--

And on that last ironic note, we reach

THE END